20221016 1 Peter 4:7-19 Hard Pressed but Not Crushed

Serving for God's Glory

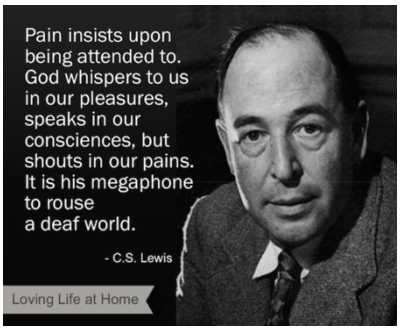
7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore, be serious and watchful in your prayers. 8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." 9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Suffering for God's Glory

12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part, He is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 Now

"If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator. (1 Peter 4:7-19, NKJV).



Today we continue our theme of suffering. On Wednesday night, we talked about some of the good that comes out of our suffering. Several in the group shared how they have experienced intense suffering that has resulted in times of their most significant growth as a Christian. We looked at a quote by CS Lewis, which says that it gets our attention

when we are in pain. Not always, but often suffering is a way that God gets our attention.

It is true that God whispers to us and winks at us in the pleasures that we experience in Him (like seeing a sunset or the dawn sky). He also speaks to us in our consciences. That happens when I'm mowing the lawn on my zero-turn lawn mower. But when we are in our greatest pain, He uses a megaphone to awaken us from our deafness and lack of focus.

One of the greatest pains I have ever experienced was when there was a hostile takeover of the business that Sandy and I started. The pain and hurt of betrayal were almost too much to handle. We saw all of OUR plans for our future melt away. We had spent 19 years working with others we had brought into the business, helping to build a great company with operations in Minnesota, Houston, and the country of Chile. When we were about to become a major force in our industry, greed took hold, and our junior partners wanted it all. They forced us to sell out cheaply or face the prospect of losing it all.

At first, I reacted in anger. I wondered how I could get back at these people who had wounded me so deeply. Little by little, over many years, I began to submit this wound to the sovereignty of God. I began to say, "God, if you're trying to tell me something, please tell it to me." Slowly but surely, I took on the "mind of Christ," seeing things from God's perspective and not my own. I think God had been trying to tell me His plans for my life, but I wasn't listening. Slowly, I began to listen. It wasn't until I took on the "mind of Christ" that I began to have peace. That means that I started to see things from God's perspective.

V. 7 Peter tells us that when we're amidst intense suffering we need to be serious and watchful in our prayers. I can tell you that when I was in the midst of my suffering, I became very serious about what I was asking God. However, it took a while until I was ready and willing to HEAR WHAT GOD WAS TRYING TO TELL ME. He was trying to talk to me, but I wasn't listening. God was trying to set me free from the toil and trials of living in the city, but I wasn't listening. He was setting me free from sitting in traffic for an hour to work and an hour from work, but I wasn't listening. He was trying to set me free from continuing my life on a treadmill and squirrel cage of wanting more, spending more, and needing more, but I hadn't been listening. I remember when we finally put our 4,300 sq foot house in Bellaire up for sale, and we sold it, we moved to our 900 sq foot weekend house at Pleasant Hill. We got an instant $5,000/month raise. The taxes and the private school tuition cost three thousand dollars a month after taxes. While I was kicking and screaming, God was setting us free. OH, HOW HE LOVES YOU AND ME.

V. 8 Peter tells us to fervently love one another. Notice that this is part of the antidote to suffering. When we are suffering, we most need fellowship with others who can help us get through it. Sometimes when we isolate ourselves in our suffering, we get crazy. We need brothers and sisters grounded in the Word who can direct us back to seeing things with the "mind of Christ." They lead us back to the truths of God's Word. We begin to see things from God's perspective. Peter then tells us, "for love covers a multitude of sins." So, what exactly does that mean?

To "cover" sin is to forgive sin, and forgiveness is only associated with loving in a radical way. It heals the person who has been wronged. When I suffered my great wound, it was only in forgiving them and saying, "God, you know better," that I began to experience my healing. It "covered" that sin that had been done against my wife and me. Jesus gave us the most outstanding example of undeserved forgiveness when He said of those crucifying Him, "Father, forgive them, for they have no idea what they're doing."

Peter is talking about interpersonal relationships and how we deal with one another. He was clear about this when He said, *"34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35, NKJV).* And then, of course, the love chapter in 1 Corinthians exhorts us by reminding us that love keeps no records of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5). Forgiveness doesn't keep score. Forgiveness doesn't look for payback.

V. 9 Peter instructs us to be hospitable to one another and to be that way without grumbling about it. We must remember that Peter was talking to Christians who were in great suffering. This meant that they were to share their food and provisions. I am sure they also had to hide one another in their homes. Loving people is NEVER CONVENIENT. We must practice hospitality and work at it. It is not natural. We're to *practice* hospitality, but it starts not just with our families but also with other believers. Paul tells the Galatian Church to "do good to all, but ESPECIALLY to those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10 paraphrased)." Hospitality will be rewarded (Matthew 10:42).

Jesus taught us that we should do good to those who cannot repay us (Luke 14:12). That's when giving is faithful giving. It is not deal-making. It is doing good to others when there is NO EXPECTATION of you getting something back.

V. 10 This verse reminds us that giving includes giving our time, talents, and treasure. We are to share out of the goodness that God has given each of us. This doesn't mean

that you're to just give out of your extra or your abundance, but you're to understand that EVERYTHING YOU HAVE COMES FROM THE LORD. When Sandy and I were newlyweds, we had very few material things. In our first few months together, we lived on about four hundred dollars a month which we earned working hard and diligently. We were quick to invite someone to eat soup and crackers with us. As we moved to Texas for years, we only made about $2,000 a month together. We paid our mortgage and paid our payment on our first little Toyota Corolla, but almost every Sunday, we made a pot of chicken soup or something, and we always made enough to invite someone to lunch. We also always gave something financially to the work of God in our local church. We trusted that God wanted us to be generous with the little that we had. THAT is being hospitable.

V. 11 This verse speaks to the talents that God gives you. It is ALL from Him. Use it for His glory. Pastor Larry is very quick to bring his handyman talents to many in need. He pastors God's lambs as he tinkers with stuff. The stuff is secondary to his pastoring. It's just a bag of tools that helps him to love and pastor people. He has a fantastic ability to get a car back on the road or coax an old air-conditioner back into working. Pastor Michael has been given the talents of listening and counseling. He no longer has a money-making clinical practice, but he uses the skills and talents that God has given him to pastor others. I often answer a legal or business question about this or that to help me as I reach someone's heart for the Lord. What are the tools that God has put into your toolbox? Are you quick to use those tools for kingdom work? That's something to think about.

VV. 12-13 Peter is telling us not to be surprised when suffering comes into our lives. It's often the rule and not the exception. We get the idea that if we follow the Lord, we'll be exempt from pain, trials, and suffering. That is not scriptural. This verse tells us that suffering is part of this whole thing of following Jesus. No, we don't go looking for it. Holiness doesn't come from our suffering but from leaning on the Lord THROUGH our suffering. When encountering suffering, we are quick to ask, "Why me?" Maybe the honest response should be, "Why not me?" We live in a broken world with broken bodies and hurt. We were meant to live forever, but we weren't meant to live forever here.

Peter tells us that when we have the mind of Christ, we are somehow able to find joy in the midst of our suffering. We should have that same mind in us. I try to stop and think about what Jesus suffered just for me when enduring suffering. He experienced intense suffering. He didn't want to suffer. He asked the Father to take the cup of suffering away from Him. But He submitted saying, "Not my will but thine."

V. 14 Peter tells us that when we suffer because we are Christ-followers, we should see that all as joy. When people criticize us, remember that they did the same to Him.

V. 15 Peter does not tell us to bring suffering on ourselves. Peter says don't be a thief or a murderer, and DON'T BE A BUSYBODY. He tells us this so we won't poke our noses into other people's business. That brings unnecessary personal suffering. Peter tells us that our mouths will get us into trouble if we're not careful. I have seen over and over that people poke their noses into the business and affairs of others and end up suffering. They lose jobs. They lose friends. They lose respect for themselves. They lose the respect of others. Don't be a busybody. What others make or have is none of your business. Keep it that way. You'll minimize suffering in your life.

VV. 16-19 These verses repeat the same assurances concerning when we suffer for our belief and trust in the Lord. They also tell us that "judgment" begins in the house of the Lord. This is talking about the pruning and trimming that God performs on us as He molds us into the image of Christ. This is not talking about judgment as to salvation. Jesus already paid for our sins on the cross. Those who are "dead" do indeed await judgment as to salvation.

Peter ends by saying we are just to submit our suffering to the sovereignty of God. Believe that God is good. He is our "faithful creator." As Aaron and I worked together this week, we discussed this sermon. He reminded me of the words of Paul that we sang together this morning.

[8] We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; [9] persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. (2 Corinthians 4:8-9, NKJV).

Peter echoes these words, reminding us that we are never crushed in our suffering. We may be perplexed, but the believer should never despair. We may be persecuted, but He never forsakes us. We may be struck down, but we are not destroyed. **We CAN ENDURE ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST, WHO STRENGTHENS US (Philippians 4:13).**

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.